



Question selected from District letters and emails received from the public.

Q I like nature but can't see myself in hiking boots with compass in hand. Any suggestions for someone like me?

A How about a short driving tour through one of our South Florida Water Management District-owned natural areas? The DuPuis Management Area is 22,000 acres of natural South Florida beauty – much of it viewable from the comfort of your car!

On the new 7-mile auto tour, you can see wetlands and pine flatwoods, stunning wildflowers, colorful butterflies, wading birds, migrating songbirds, deer, bobcats, and even several pairs of bald eagles. An informative and reusable booklet available at Gate One describes interesting stops

along the way. You may even be inspired to walk some of the well-marked trails.

The DuPuis Management Area is located in western Palm Beach and Martin counties on Highway 76. You can learn more at www.sfwmd.gov/org/clm/lsd/duprecinfo.html or by calling the Visitor Center at (561) 924-5310.



Bird-Watchers Flock to Lucky Hammock



Dappled sunlight speckles the forest floor...tree snails pop out of the corner of your eye like objects in a 3-D film...songs of the white-eyed vireo accompany the sound of crunching leaves underfoot...wild coffee leaves feel smooth, grooved and satisfying to the touch...musky scents of earth below and green, lush life above freshen the air.

Savor these sensations as you make your way through the 2-acre Lucky Hammock near Homestead – so named because it remains standing among vast agricultural fields in south Miami-Dade County.

Located less than one-half mile from the main entrance to Everglades National Park, the hammock is part of the Frog Pond property the South Florida Water Management District acquired in 1996 as part of the Save Our Rivers program. Like a fresco that needed careful restoration to reveal its true beauty, District land managers Matt Davis and Jason Smith peeled away layers of Brazilian pepper and other exotic plants to uncover a tropical hammock.

“We suspect this land used to be pine rockland habitat 50 years ago, but changed



(top left) A *Vermillion flycatcher* is spotted in Lucky Hammock. The bird breeds in the arid Southwest, but near water, and winters in South and Central Florida. (above) The fishing pier near Lucky Hammock along Aerojet Road is a popular spot for bird-watchers.

into a hammock because of the lack of natural fire,” Smith said.

This small chunk of wonder, landscaped on one side with native butterfly plants, is now popular with nature enthusiasts from across the country, especially bird-watchers. Joyce and Carn Catherwood of Longview, Texas are among them. “Oh, it’s famous,” Carn said of the hammock. The site is listed in field guides and and birders post sightings regularly at (www.tropicalaudubon.org). One posting last February revealed sightings of a peregrine falcon, least flycatcher, and a yellow-breasted chat, with numerous painted buntings on other days. Robin Diaz of Miami has listed 158 species at Lucky Hammock.

Further down Aerojet Road, the District is also restoring a 10-acre hammock. Here Davis and Smith cleared the acreage of a Brazilian pepper monoculture and planted thousands of native plants – 36 species in all.

To get to Lucky Hammock, follow the signs to the main entrance of Everglades National Park in Homestead. One-half mile before you reach the entrance, go left on Aerojet Road. Lucky Hammock is about 150 yards on the right-hand side.



A snail makes its way up a tree in Lucky Hammock near Homestead. In addition to tree snails, butterflies and a variety of wildlife, the hammock is home to 158 species of birds and 36 species of plants.

CREDITS

WaterMatters is produced by the South Florida Water Management District’s Department of Public Information to inform the public about District projects and programs. An internet version is also available in English and Spanish at www.sfwmd.gov

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The South Florida Water Management District is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state. It is the oldest and largest of the state’s five water management districts.

Our mission is to manage and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems and water supply.

WANTED: BIG RIGS FOR BIG DIGS

Expo highlights well-drilling technologies

With a couple thousand groundwater scientists, engineers, practitioners, and well drillers in one room at the annual Ground Water Expo, the South Florida Water Management District hoisted its Everglades restoration banner and set about the task of learning what new technologies might benefit the River of Grass.

“Very few drillers have the equipment and expertise to drill the holes necessary to create the Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) wells that are a major component of Everglades restoration,” said Michael Bennett, lead hydrogeologist for the District. “December’s National Ground Water Association event in Orlando created an opportunity to tell the industry of our plans, learn of new technologies and, hopefully, broaden our pool of available and qualified drillers willing to compete for upcoming contracts.”

The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) includes 333 ASR wells with a target capacity of 5 million gallons per day each. The underground storage component has an

estimated cost of \$1.7 billion.

Before any of the permanent wells are drilled, however, an ASR regional study will pursue a significant amount of subsurface information collected during well construction through well cuttings, whole-diameter coring, aquifer performance tests and other methods. Many of these methods are costly and time consuming; more cost-effective approaches are being considered and will be evaluated before the drilling, testing and construction activities start next summer.

The ASR regional study will take roughly eight years to complete and is projected to cost approximately \$54 million. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the South Florida Water Management District are cost-sharing partners for design studies required prior to implementation of any large-scale Everglades restoration ASR facilities.

For the latest on the ASR study, visit the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan web site (www.evergladesplan.org).

